

## Deb at Eastern Gateway Community College Project HOPE

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Deb is a cheerful, laid-back student at the Hannah E. Mullins School of Practical Nursing who will graduate in February 2013. Her story began about 10 years ago, when she and her husband of 25 years divorced. She struggled with the fact that she had been deceived for so many years, and her children struggled as well. Deb spent the next several years trying to comfort her children as their father wanted nothing to do with them after the divorce. She found herself trying to get by with limited spousal support, and her home went into foreclosure.

After enduring so much heartbreak and spending so much time caring for others, she decided to do something for herself now that her children were grown. She enrolled in nursing school. It has been a tough road for her; since her spousal support ended in August, 2012, she has been living on student loan money and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, but still she has kept her smile.

Upon entering the nursing program, Deb formed a very close bond with one of her classmates. They became good friends and study partners, helping each other with everything, and each benefited greatly from the friendship. Late in the program, Deb's friend had to drop out for health reasons, and this took a toll on Deb. She did not feel as though she had connected with any of the other students, and now her support was gone. She became very emotional, and her grades began to slip. However, she quickly realized that this was her one shot at doing what she wanted to do with her life. She began to focus on the positive and kept in mind how much better things would be for her upon completion of this program. Again, a smile returned to her face.

Then, in January 2013, Deb's furnace broke. Because she is on a weatherization program, she had to go through specific channels for the repair. She came to Project HOPE, a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance, for help with the costs as she just did not have the money to spare for the repair. Deb never once complained. She insisted that she was warm enough with her few space heaters and blankets, despite the fact that it had been brutally cold. By the time her furnace was repaired, she had gone nearly two weeks without heat. Still, she maintained a very positive attitude.

Deb Maust refuses to waste time and energy worrying about things she cannot change. She has persevered through many hardships, but she remains focused and, above all, happy. Her courage and positive attitude are nothing short of inspirational, and it was a pleasure to have her in Project HOPE.

## **Lynette at Eastern Gateway Community College Project HOPE**

Lynette McGhee is a determined, inspiring 43-year-old African American woman and mother of four children between the ages of 12 and 18. Lynette is a hard-working, dedicated student who, in the middle of the school year, found herself financially struggling after her mother had a severe stroke. Her mother needed long-term care and entered a nursing home. Lynette became financially responsible for her mother's care. She realized that things were about to take a turn for the worse, but she was determined to continue with her education.

Lynette became involved in Project Hope through an active advertising recruitment campaign. At that time, she was considering returning to school but did not think it was possible until she called and spoke with a friendly, encouraging recruiter. She enrolled in the Healthcare Information Medical Office Management program at the Mahoning County Career and Technical Center in Canfield, Ohio. She was immediately connected with a Student Coach who quickly became a mentor and friend.

When Lynette found herself in a financial and emotional crisis, her first instinct was to talk to her Student Coach. She struggled with making payments on her car, rent, and managing school and her family while trying to ensure that her mother had the medical care she desperately required. She depleted all of her resources and borrowed against her car for her mother's care. Lynette was unable to work and had cut her expenses to the bare bones, including terminating her phone service, but it was not enough. She was in danger of losing her home and car, which might require her to drop out of training and crush her dreams of becoming financially self-sufficient.

Lynette was not accustomed to asking for help, so instead she decided to write a letter. She wrote a powerful letter to her Student Coach only asking for the minimum amount to avoid eviction. Lynette's thoughts were filled with anxiety about how to keep a roof over her family's heads, continue with school, take care of her four children, and now manage the care of her mother.

Project Hope was able to support Lynette with a one-time payment for her rent totaling \$416.64. Although the amount seems small, Lynette knew in her heart she had nowhere else to turn for help. With the funding from HPOG and the support from Project Hope, Lynette avoided eviction and finished training. 🏠

Lynette is currently working in the healthcare field in medical records and is continuing to take classes to become a nurse. Her relationship with her Student Coach paved the way for the necessary support needed to keep Lynette and her family in their home during a time of family crisis.

She sent a thank you card to her Student Coach with the following greeting: "Please share this thank you with everyone at Project Hope for keeping me and my family in our home. GOD BLESS YOU ALL."

Lynette continues her relationship with her Student Coach through social media and is happy and proud of her accomplishments and her future in healthcare.